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STATE FOR SCA/FO (DAS GASTRIGHT), SCA/A, S/CT, EUR/RPM  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN  
OSD FOR SHIVERS  
CENTCOM FOR CSTC-A, CG CJTF-82, POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2017  
TAGS: [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [MASS](#) [NATO](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN BORDER FIRING INCIDENTS

REF: A) KABUL 1345 B) STATE 66592

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood; reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: Another border firing incident between Afghan and Pakistani forces occurred early on the morning of May 17. The facts regarding which side fired first and why remain hard to pin down, with each side blaming the other for having provoked the exchange. The incident occurred in the same location as a May 13 cross-border firing incident, and comes on the heels of an April 19 firing incident further south (Paktika province). Immediately following these incidents, the Ambassador and senior military leaders in Afghanistan contacted senior Afghan leaders, emphasizing that the Afghan and Pakistani governments must do everything in their powers to reduce tensions and prevent further outbreaks of violence between Afghan and Pakistani forces. The failure of Afghan and Pakistani leadership to prevent these kinds of incidents is a tremendous drain on scarce political and military resources. It also severely undercuts our information operations campaign, precisely at a time when we should be capitalizing on the recent demise of Taliban battlefield commander Mullah Dadullah Lang. End Summary.

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FACTS HARD TO PIN DOWN  
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¶2. (S) Another border firing incident between Afghan and Pakistani forces occurred early on the morning of May 17. The facts regarding which side fired first and why remain hard to pin down, with each side blaming the other for having provoked the exchange. However, initial information indicates that Afghan Border Police (ABP) and Pakistani Frontier Corps (PFC) personnel exchanged small/heavy arms and artillery fire in the vicinity of ABP Border Security Post 12 (BSP 12), which is located between the Afghan province of Paktika (Jaji District) and Pakistan's Kurram Agency. As yet, there are no reports of casualties on either side. By early afternoon on May 17, reports indicated that the situation had stabilized and the firing had stopped, with Afghan and Pakistani forces having been ordered to exercise restraint.

13. (S) The incident occurred in the same location as a May 13 cross-border firing incident in which at least one Afghan Border patrolman and two Afghan civilians (children at a school) reportedly were killed, with at least five other ABP officers wounded. Post understands there also was a small number of Pakistani casualties in this incident, but is not aware of the details. Following the May 13 incident, U.S. (ISAF) troops joined Afghan and Pakistani security officials and the Governor of Paktia in a trilateral "border flag meeting" (BFM) in Teri Mangel (Pakistan) in an effort to prevent future such incidents. Following the BFM, as the U.S. (ISAF) and Afghan representatives were leaving the school compound where the meeting took place, they reportedly were fired upon by an individual who was wearing a PFC uniform. One U.S. military officer was killed, and a U.S. soldier and two interpreters were wounded in the attack. The U.S. (ISAF) representatives returned fire and evacuated the compound. The incident remains under investigation.

14. (S) These recent cross-border firing incidents come on the heels of an April 19 firing incident further south (Paktika province) that reportedly erupted over a dispute between Afghan and Pakistani forces over marker flags the Pakistani military had placed in the vicinity of the border in preparation for building a segment of fence (ref A). That incident prompted senior-level crisis intervention and raised expectations that the April 30 Karzai-Musharraf meeting in Ankara could be used to reduce the bilateral Afghan-Pakistani political tensions that give rise to such incidents.

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BREAKING THE CYCLE  
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15. (S) Immediately following the May 13 and 14 incidents, the Ambassador and senior military leaders in Afghanistan contacted President Karzai and other Afghan senior leaders, emphasizing that the Afghan and Pakistani governments must do everything in their powers to reduce tensions and prevent further outbreaks of violence between Afghan and Pakistani forces. Our message underlined the fact that the failure of the Afghan and Pakistani governments to manage their relations is undermining all of our efforts, and had led to the May 14 death of a U.S. military officer. The situation is unacceptable and must be rectified. Post subsequently reinforced the message delivered to Karzai with similar demarches to senior levels of the MFA and MOD (ref B). The Ambassador reiterated this message to Afghan National Security Advisor Rassoul following reports of the May 17 incident.

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PAG URGES ACTION TO DEFUSE TENSIONS  
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16. (S) At the May 17 PAG chaired by NSA Rassoul, MOD Wardak and D/MOI Khalid both emphasized that they had ordered their forces (ANA and Afghan Border Police) to exercise maximum restraint. Wardak said that the Afghan Army Chief of Staff and Operations Chief had been in touch with their Pakistani counterparts and that they had discussed a possible joint commission to prevent future incidents.

17. (S) COMISAF McNeill reiterated that no matter who fired the first shot, the border must remain calm. Both sides need to remain focused on their common enemy. Both he and Ambassador Wood confirmed that the same message was being passed on the other side of the border. The Ambassador added that while we are convinced that the Afghans are using restraint, the situation is so tense and the political context so complicated that a little heat can produce fire. The Afghans need to take active measures along with the Pakistanis through the Trilateral Military Commission so that small mistakes do not result in shootings and possibly deaths. He said that the U.S. is very enthusiastic about the bilateral jirga and hopes recent events will not impede it. However, we hope that steps will be taken before the August

meeting to get off the knife edge.

18. (S) COMISAF also noted that there are 37 countries contributing to Afghanistan security and some of them face difficult decisions in the near future. We do not want to see any action that will make it harder for them to decide in our favor. UNAMA D/SRSG Alexander reinforced the points made by Ambassador Wood and COMISAF, stressing the need to find ways to actively avoid falling into pitfalls.

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COMMENT  
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19. (S/NF) Post will continue to engage senior Afghan political leaders, emphasizing that these incidents must stop. While border firing incidents unfortunately are not unprecedented, this latest series is remarkable for the amount of firing, the potential for escalation, and, above all, the risk posed to U.S. and other Coalition/ISAF troops. (Note: Following the May 13 firing incident, angry Jaji tribesmen reportedly began massing in the border area. When one factors in local/tribal issues, the potential for an incident spiraling out of control increases. End Note) The failure of Afghan and Pakistani leadership to prevent these kinds of incidents is a tremendous drain on scarce political and military resources. It also severely undercuts our information operations campaign, precisely at a time when we should be capitalizing on the recent demise of Taliban battlefield commander Mullah Dadullah Lang.  
WOOD